

16 February 2024

**The Rt Hon Rishi Sunak MP The Prime Minister 10 Downing Street
London, SW1A 0AA**

Email: rishi.sunak.mp@parliament.uk

RE: British Palestinian families call for urgent and immediate condemnation of Israel's imminent Rafah offensive.

Dear Prime Minister,

The following correspondence is issued by the International Centre of Justice for Palestinians (ICJP) on behalf of members of the Palestinian community in the UK with families and loved ones living in Gaza.

The British Palestinian community has been in continuous grief regarding family members and friends who have been killed by the ongoing Israeli operation in Gaza. We have been pleading through various channels to highlight what our loved ones are facing under the indiscriminate bombardment and the dire humanitarian situation, with no access to water, electricity, fuel, or food. Communications channels have also been restricted or cut; we live each day waiting for the 'we're alive' message.

During the past 132 days we have seen a humanitarian crisis unfold and an insurmountable amount of pain and anguish. The suffering has only been compounded further by the paltry humanitarian aid that has been allowed into Gaza. The UN and other human rights organisations have repeatedly warned that the crisis in Gaza has reached catastrophic levels.

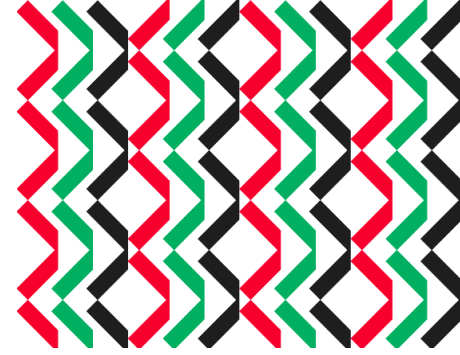
Everyone in Gaza is going hungry, barely surviving day-to-day and routinely going without meals. The Israeli government is preventing food aid from entering besieged Gaza and the very little that does enter is wholly inadequate for the 2.2 million population.¹ More than 570,000 face 'famine levels' of 'catastrophic hunger' according to multiple UN sources including the World Food Programme (WFP).²

Gaza is the most densely populated place on earth. Before Israel's war on Gaza, 200,000 people lived in Rafah, now 1.4 million Palestinians are crammed in the tiny city. Our families are

¹ Julia Frankel. (9 February 2024). [Israel is holding up food for 1.1 million Palestinians in Gaza, the main UN aid agency there says](#). AP News

² WFP. (21 December 2023). [Gaza grapples with catastrophic hunger as new report predicts famine if conflict continues](#). UN





amongst those forcibly displaced to Rafah, where there now is a population density of nearly 31,000 individuals per square kilometre.³ Conditions of overcrowding, the shortage of necessities; and poor sanitation and weather conditions have allowed for the wide spread of diseases.

The severity of this situation cannot be overstated. Given the population density, any expansion of military operations into Rafah, particularly following the latest indications from Israeli officials, will have catastrophic consequences. Latest reports suggests that the Israeli military plan to escalate their activities in Rafah, posing an imminent threat to the millions of Palestinians sheltering in the city. The UK must take immediate action to protect civilians and uphold its obligations to humanity.

Moreover, there are troubling parallels between these developments and extremist rhetoric within the Israeli government advocating for the displacement of Palestinians from Gaza, an Israeli defence official told Israel's Channel 13 that Gaza will become a 'city of tents'.⁴ Such actions would exacerbate the already dire humanitarian crisis in Rafah and perpetuate further suffering and instability in the region.

Two weeks ago, the International Court of Justice ruled that there is a serious risk that Israel is committing genocide, that Israel must not carry out genocidal acts and the UK and all other states have an obligation not only to prevent genocide but also ensure they are not complicit in genocide. Two weeks on, we are about to witness what could be the biggest military onslaught and massacre in four months, in the one place that people have fled to having been told that it is safe.

Considering these urgent concerns, you must take immediate action. As Prime Minister, I implore you to make it clear that the UK Government unequivocally condemns Israel's plans to expand military operations in Rafah. Additionally, diplomatic efforts must be intensified to address underlying issues and pursue an immediate ceasefire that prioritises the safety of the civilian population of which the majority are children.

An immediate ceasefire is crucial for sufficient aid to enter Gaza and for urgent medical care to be delivered to those in critical need of medical attention. Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and

³ Ibrahim Hamami. (12 February 2024). [Ibrahim Hamami: The invasion of Rafah is a full-fledged war crime.](#) Al-Arab in UK

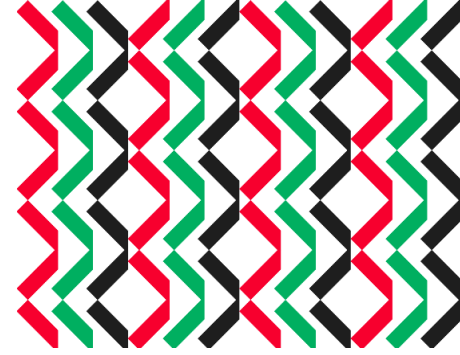
⁴ Yaron Steinbuch. (11 October 2023) [Israeli defense official says Gaza will be reduced to a 'city of tents' while a politician calls for nuclear bombs.](#) New York Post





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other member countries of the Commonwealth, and of the world, have now called for an immediate ceasefire and it is time Britain followed suit.

Time is of the essence and decisive action is crucial to prevent further escalation of this crisis that is unfolding. We hope that the British Government can uphold and be true to its commitment to the preservation of human life, international humanitarian law, and the safety of the people of Gaza. We sincerely hope you will heed this urgent appeal.

Yours sincerely,

Tayab Ali

Director of the International Centre of Justice for Palestinians
On behalf of members of the Palestinian community in the UK.

